186, 728, 648, 668

× Syria	MD1
Israel	MF1
Jordan	MG1
Iraq	MH1
Lebanon	ME1

/For an account of the formation and growth of the Arab Succession States after World War I, the Arab Nationalist Movement, relations between the Arab countries and the great Powers, see 66: Bonné, M1 Middle East, category 116, pp. 77-87./

196 The other is the will to work together for the attainment of a common aim in which all believe and for which all are willing to sacrifice something or everything. When this will derives its content from the consciousness of solidarity, and the members of the group take as their common aim the preservation both of that consciousness and of the characteristics on which it is based, nationalism arises. Political nationalism comes into existence when the attempt is made to achieve the common aim by means of the establishment of a State, which includes all the members of the group and of which the Government is imbued with the nationalist ideal.

000 In Europe, the idea of nationalism became an important political force during the nineteenth century. In one aspect it was a development of the idea that 'the people' can and should be master of its own destiny: that the ordinary citizens of a State have both the right, and if effectively organized, the power to set up and to pull down Governments; and that Governments are only entitled to demand the obedience of the community which they rule if and in so far as they emanate from the will of that community. In another aspect it was the child of Romanticism, which was, among other things, the attempt to discover in Time and History what for the Christian belongs only to eternity: an adequate object of sacrifice and worship, a supreme purpose and consummation of human life. One type of Romanticism found what it sought in the community and the life devoted to the service of the community; and it was especially attracted to that type of community which is based on common memories and a common history.

3

186 Among the Arabs, nationalism in the sense defined above
668 did not emerge until the later part of the nineteenth century. The sense of solidarity and pride in the Arab tradition had long existed; but they did not form the basis of a coherent movement until the West began to impinge upon the Arab world. Its impact had two effects, both of which worked together to produce the Arab movement. On the one hand, the West brought new dangers to the Arabo-Islamic life. On the other hand, far from destroying the Arabs' faith in their having a special part to play in history, it gave them fresh vitality and the promise of new strength. Arab nationalism

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MDI Syria #101

may be defined as the resurgence of the will to live of the Arab people, produced by the action of the West upon it, and with the object of combating the dangers and realizing the benefits of that action.

It is true that the explicit aim of the nationalist movement in its first phase was not to come to terms with the West but to shake off the rule of the Ottoman Turks. But it was not simply a movement of revolt against an oppressor. The Ottoman rule was resented so much more bitterly than in the past, not because it was so much worse, but because it prevented the attainment of that new life of which the Arabs were becoming aware, and made it impossible for them to take what they believed to be their rightful place in the world. The overthrow of the Turkish régime, in the conception at least of the more thoughtful of them, would only be the beginning of their national effort. It would create the conditions in which it would become possible to face the real problems of their community.

What those problems were has already been made clear in Chapters III and IV. Most fundamental of all was the danger of the complete destruction of the principles of loyalty upon which the traditional community had rested: membership of the family, the tribe and the religious community, respect for the past, the habit of obedience to the suzerain. Should they go and nothing take their place, the community might dissolve into a rabble of individuals without loyalties or the consciousness of belonging to a group. It was to avoid this danger that the nationalists endeavoured to arouse a consciousness of the common heritage of language, historical memories and customs shared by the Arabs; and to make that consciousness the basis of political action and ultimately of government.

A more immediate, although less fundamental, problem was raised by the penetration of Western goods and economic processes. This was beneficial in so far as it held out hopes of raising the standard of living of the people; but it dislocated the traditional structure of commerce and industry, and it threatened to place the economic life of the Arabs in the power of Western trading and concessionary companies. A similar process of dislocation was taking place in other aspects of social life. Here again much that was bad in the old order was being swept away, but also what was valuable

was threatened. The process had a further effect: it emphasized, and made more unbearable, injustices and inadequacies which had formerly been accepted as inevitable or had passed unremarked. Thus there grew up the belief that social and economic Westernization was undoubtedly beneficial, but needed to be controlled and directed, and that a controlling and directing agency could not exist so long as the government was in the hands of foreigners who neither understood the needs of the Arabs nor cared primarily for their welfare.

A further element was added to the movement by the wounded pride which most Arabs felt when they considered the attitude of the West towards them. The Western Powers in act if not in word treated the Arab countries as if the desires and wishes of their inhabitants were matters of minor importance; individual Westerners showed only too often their contempt for a people who dressed, believed and thought so differently from them, and were so backward in the material arts. The contempt was no less wounding when it was concealed beneath a romantic admiration for the primitive or the exotic. It was the more unbearable to the Arabs because of their conviction that in essentials they were not inferior to the West, no less than because of their suspicion that in many other things they were indeed far behind the West and had much to learn from it. It gave rise to a desire to equal the West in those things on which the West set value, and to be recognized by the West as equals. Since the West set value upon the independence and power of the national State, upon economic prosperity and a certain ordering of social life, the Arabs too must be independent and powerful, and modern in their social organization.

4

Such were the factors which produced the nationalist movement. The movement was specifically Arab, aiming at the creation of an Arab nation and State which should include all branches of the Arab people, and not simply at the establishment of Syrian, Iraqi, Hejazi and other separate nations; and this for a number of reasons. The historic imagination of the Arab peoples had taken as its main and almost its only object the memories of the early Islamic period, of the orthodox Caliphs and their successors the Umayyads and

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

Abbasids. Thus they were vividly aware that there had been a time when the Arabs had been conscious of themselves as a special community, and as a community had played a leading part in history. The thought of the solitary moment of history when the Arabs had been united in a single Empire, in which they had been the dominant element, overshadowed in their minds the memory of ages before and since. The revival of interest in Arabic literature in the course of the nineteenth century had a similar effect: coming to them through the medium of their own language, it aroused their pride and the sense of their own possibilities in a way which would have been impossible for the Greek culture of Syria or the pre-Islamic culture of Iraq. Then again the vision of a united Arab nation seemed to offer to a people becoming conscious of their weakness, and of the internal divisions which were the partial cause of it, a strength such as a Syrian or an Iraqi nation could never possess.

5

In the light of this analysis, it is possible to summarize the assumptions and aims of the movement.

The basic assumptions of Arab nationalism are: first, that there is or can be created an Arab nation, formed of all who share the Arabic language and cultural heritage; secondly, that this Arab nation ought to form a single independent political unit, both in the interests of the nation itself and in those of the world; and thirdly, that the creation of such a political unit presupposes the development among the members of the Arab nation of a consciousness, not simply that they are members of it, but that their being members is the factor which should determine their political decisions and loyalties.

The ultimate aim of Arab nationalism is to preserve and enrich the Arab heritage: to enable the Arabs to live in the modern world on an equal footing with other peoples, and to contribute to its civilization without being forced to break with their past. The political objectives of the nationalist movement are the independence of all the Arab lands; the establishment of some degree of unity between them; the encouragement of national consciousness; and the reorganization of the social and economic structure of the nation by means of a process of controlled and discriminate Westernization.

11: Hourani 5-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria #01

The movement of which these are the assumptions and aims is still at a comparatively early stage of development; and its ideals, although they have found their expression in patriotic rhetoric and poetry, have not yet achieved a reasoned and systematic exposition. But although Arab nationalism is still largely inarticulate and unformed, it does not spring only from passion and prejudice, nor is it confined only to the educated few who are its spokesmen. It is a movement with rational grounds and purposes, which, although they have not yet become fully explicit, exist implicitly and as motive forces alike in the mind of the peasant, who feels nothing but a vague unrest; of the educated townsman, in whom unrest has crystallized into definite emotions, desires and grievances; and of the politician, who expresses the emotions, desires and grievances in speeches and programmes. Although they might not be able to define and defend nationalism, they are all in some degree Arab nationalists.

Like all immature movements, Arab nationalism has not yet found its own authentic voice. It tends to imitate Western nationalism in its programme and its terminology. It is of great importance to make it clear that the spirit of the movement has not yet been definitely or adequately expressed. Its present form is not the only form which it could take. It is possible that if nationalism fails to obtain its explicit objectives, or even if it achieves them and its success is followed by disillusion, the feelings and desires which have given it birth will express themselves in different ways. Instead of a movement for an independent State and a modernized society there might be an outbreak of religious fanaticism, which would not help in the establishment of good relations between the Arabo-Islamic world and the West. Instead of a movement with rational purposes, there might arise one whose only ends were destruction and self-destruction.

6

Which of these paths Arab nationalism will take depends very largely upon the relationship which it establishes, on the one hand with Islam, and on the other with the West.

Although the movements of Arab and of Islamic revival lay emphasis upon different points it is impossible wholly to separate Arab nationalist feeling from Islamic feeling. In most Arabs the two tend to flow together; the movements

11: Hourani 5-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria M01

of national and of religious revival are energized by the same complex of desires and emotions within the individuals who have created and who sustain them; and the ordinary Moslem Arab is not conscious of belonging in one aspect of his being to the Arab community, and in another to the Islamic, but rather of belonging to a single integrated 'Arabo-Islamic' community in which he does not clearly distinguish the Arab from the Islamic elements. Even in analysis it is impossible wholly to separate the two. On the one hand there is in Islam no sharp distinction between spiritual and temporal, Church and State; and in consequence a movement of religious reform will have its repercussions in every sphere of social and political life. On the other, many Arab nationalists, especially of the older generation, would define the Arab nation partly in terms of the Islamic religion, which most members of the nation profess, and of which the Holy Book is written in Arabic; and they would therefore regard the preservation and revival of Islam as being among the aims of the nationalist movement.

What has just been said must be qualified in two ways. First, the secular view of life is becoming ever more widespread, especially among the younger generation and among those educated in Europe and America; and it is giving rise to the belief that it is better both for religion and for political activity if the two are kept distinct from one another. Thus it is possible to see the beginning of the idea of a secular nationalism, which rests upon elements of unity other than participation in a common religion; which aims at building a Westernized laic State; and in which therefore Moslems, Christians and atheists alike can join on a footing of equality. This lay nationalism is not consciously hostile to religion, although it is opposed to theocracy; but it is possible that at some time in the future it will come into conflict with Islamic orthodoxy.

Secondly, the connexion between Islam and Arab nationalism is perhaps emphasized less in Syria and Lebanon than in the other parts of Arab Asia. This is so not only because Syrians and Lebanese have assimilated Western thought more deeply than other Arab peoples and are more inclined to adopt modern Western secularism, but also because of the existence of an Arabic-speaking Christian element in the Syrian and Lebanese population. Moslem Arab nationalists

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cannot leave the Christians out of account in their plans for the future of Syria and Lebanon, and many of them sincerely desire Christians and Moslems alike to participate in the national community of the future. There are many Christians too who share the ideals of Arab nationalism; and indeed Syrian and Lebanese Christians were among the founders of the national movement, since they saw in the spread of the ideal of national unity the only way of escape from the religious differences which had for so long weakened their country. It is natural that Christian Arab nationalists should define the Arab nation mainly in terms of language, history, and race, and should draw a distinction, perhaps too sharply, between it and the Islamic community.

7

The present attitude of nationalism towards the Western Powers was determined during the years of the First World War and the subsequent peace settlement. Those years were not without their gains. It was then that the Arabs became conscious of their unity and of the strength which might be theirs. They gained collective pride and a memory of things done in common, and also legends and martyrs.

But they were also years of bitterness and disappointment. Freedom and unity seemed for a moment to be within the grasp of the Arabs, but they were snatched away. It has been described in Chapter II how the former Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were divided from one another into several States, only the most backward of which was recognized as immediately independent, the others being placed under British or French control. This was all the more disappointing because it was Great Britain which had promised the Arabs independence and unity and had appeared to be the friend of Arab nationalism. Thus the movement took on in those years an anti-British and anti-French, and even in general an anti-Western, complexion; indeed the mere fact that Great Britain and France were now in control of the Arab countries would have been enough to give it such a complexion. The hostility was mingled with disappointment, since politically these two Powers had seemed for a moment to be the friends of the nationalists; but also with gratitude, since culturally the movement was deeply in debt to them. The attitude of Arab nationalists to Great Britain and France has therefore

000 and the creation of the kingdom of Sa'udi Arabia, was followed with close attention throughout Arab Asia; the wisdom and energy of Ibn Sa'ud, no less than his success as a ruler of Beduin, deeply impressed the Arab imagination. The signature of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in 1930 and of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936 was also of great importance in stimulating the desire of other regions for independence.

Outside the Arab world the example of Turkey had a great influence on the Arab countries. By her own efforts Turkey had secured her independence and was trying to build up a wholly Westernized society. Arabs might not regard the path which Turkey had taken as one they could follow, but at least they were encouraged by her success.

13

668 In none of the countries of Arab Asia is the nationalist movement more influential than in the Levant States. It was by Syrians and Lebanese that the idea of the Arab nation was first expounded; it was they who organized the first nationalist societies. Almost all political thought among the town-population of Syria, and among large sections of that of Lebanon, is Arab nationalist. Syrians and Lebanese have played a leading part in every phase of the movement's evolution. The schools of Beirut helped to revive the Arabic language, and their graduates to give it a modern literature. Syrians and Lebanese were active in the secret societies of the period before 1914. They participated in the Anglo-Arab negotiations during the war of 1914–1918. They gave the movement its martyrs, executed by Jemal Pasha in 1915. They supplied many of the officers and soldiers of the Arab army.

The nationalists claim that Syria and Lebanon are necessary to the Arab State which they desire. An Arab State which did not control the Mediterranean coast-line with its ports would be seriously handicapped in its trade, and strategically it would lie at the mercy of whatever Power controlled them. Culturally also an Arab State which did not include Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut would be at a serious disadvantage in the process of assimilating Western culture.

To the minds of Arab nationalists, the Arab State is as necessary for the Levant States as they for it. The bane of Syria and Lebanon has always been their internal divisions,

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and the separatist spirit to which these have given rise. They can only be overcome or at least be rendered harmless by the development of a consciousness of unity more powerful and more effective than the consciousness of those factors which create division. Such a consciousness of unity cannot be created out of nothing; use must be made of what already exists. At present there is little or no sense of Syrian unity, or even of the existence of geographical Syria as a separate country. But there does exist a consciousness of 'Arabism', with a richness of historical and literary association to which 'Syrianism' could never aspire. It is only, so the Arab nationalists claim, by developing this already existing consciousness that the forces of separatism can be overcome.

There are other advantages for which Syria and Lebanon can hope from Arab unity and independence. They can hope for a remedy for their present military and economic weakness. An independent Syria with four million inhabitants would always lie at the mercy of Turkey; but the danger would be less great if she were supported diplomatically and militarily by an Arab union. Equally, the technical and commercial skill of her inhabitants would be given greater scope if the Levant States were part of a larger economic unit of which the very large economic resources are in need of development.

Not only in the economic but in every sphere of life the Syrians and Lebanese need opportunities such as their land cannot give. There is in them a certain greatness, which has been too long asleep and is now awakening. For two generations the educated youth have sought opportunities in Egypt and in the New World. But both these spheres are now largely closed to them, and the second of them could at the best of times only be entered at a great price: the loss of their language and their native land, and acceptance of the life of a stranger and an exile. It is not strange therefore that the thoughts of young Syrians and Lebanese, especially of those among them who feel responsible for the future of their country, should be turning eastwards and southwards; and that they hope to find in the other regions of Arab Asia opportunities at once for the exercise of their talents and for the fulfilment of their duty to their people.

118

668 The progress of the nationalist movement in Syria and Lebanon is obstructed both by its own weaknesses and by the existence of certain forces which are hostile to it, or else which place obstacles in the way of a full attainment of its objectives. One weakness is the lack of outstanding political leaders. Even the most distinguished figures have never had a following comparable to that of Zaghlul in Egypt. This may be partly because the Syrian populace is critical and intelligent and not prone to hero-worship, but it is also due to the lack of leaders of an heroic stature. One cause of this is the execution by Jemal Pasha in 1915 of a number of the most prominent members of Arab nationalist organizations. Another is the drain upon energy and ability caused by the movement of emigration. A third is the absence during the last twenty years of opportunities for training in responsibility. The élite of the country, which in Iraq was drawn at least partly into the orbit of government almost from the beginning of the Mandatory régime, has in Syria been for the most part in opposition to the authorities since the end of the war of 1914–1918, and has never lost the defects of an irresponsible and powerless opposition.

Another weakness of the movement is the absence of a long-term social and economic policy. Parties may at times make grandiose promises about the nature of the new world which they propose to build, but there is no evidence that any of them is undertaking a profound and realistic investigation of the country's vast social and economic problems. Nationalists sometimes argue that the political problem is prior to all others, and that it will be time to face other problems when independence has been won. To discuss them now would not only divert attention from the struggle for independence, but would cause a split in the ranks of the nationalist movement, which is united in wanting a free Arab State, but divided on the kind of free Arab State which it wants. The lack of a constructive social policy is due partly to most of the nationalist leaders coming from the landowning class, which is interested in preserving rather than altering the existing social system. This is inevitable at present, because education is still largely confined to a single class, and also because of the absence of any other class strong enough to challenge the power of

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the landowners; but it is a source of weakness now, and may be even more so in the future.

15

Opposition to Arab nationalism comes from those who believe that the people of geographical Syria constitute a separate nation and not simply a part of the Arab nation. Geographical Syria, they maintain, must preserve its identity both against the imperialism of the Western Powers and against the ambitions of the Arab nationalists. Its destiny is to be neither wholly European nor wholly Arab. It is a link between the two worlds of which it forms the common frontier. But also it is more than a mere link; it has a spirit and civilization of its own, which it must preserve. Those who hold this belief regard the hopes of the Arab nationalists as no more than dreams, without foundation either in history or in national interest. The basis of a nation, they maintain, is not language or religion or any such characteristic, but the will to live together, and this will can only arise out of a living interest; but the interest of geographical Syria is not to merge with the other Arabic-speaking countries to the point where it loses its own power of independent decision. To do so would be to lose more than it would gain: not only in the economic and political spheres, but also because the other Arab regions are at a lower level of civilization and less inclined to accept the need for a fundamental modernization and reconstruction of society. Thus for Syria to enter an Arab State would be a retrograde step. While she should welcome co-operation with the surrounding countries in matters of common concern, it should be undertaken for a clear and reasonable purpose and not out of sentiment; and it could only be profitably undertaken once a strong efficient Government and centre of political decision had been created in geographical Syria.

For those of this way of thinking, the first essential is therefore to build up a strong Syrian Government, which will take in hand the reform of social and economic life and will conduct the relations of Syria with other countries, Arabic-speaking or not, on a footing of equality. The obstacles to this are both external and internal. The danger from outside comes from the ambitions of the Imperialist Powers. That from inside, which is equally insidious, arises from the strength of sectarian and other divisions, the

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448 domination of society by religious leaders, the weakness of national sentiment and the fascination of dreams of Arab Empire. These dangers can only be overcome by the activities of a carefully organized and disciplined party.

In its full and articulate form this is the doctrine of the 'Syrian National Party'.[1] But many who do not belong to that party and who indeed think of themselves as Arab nationalists would assent to some at least of these propositions, and insist that Syria has a special destiny inside the Arab world.

The young Socialist and Communist movements are potential opponents of nationalism, but so far no serious conflict between them has arisen. They are of very recent growth and have not yet acquired a large following. Of their adherents many are Armenians and thus not immediately concerned with the question of Arab nationalism; while most of the Arabs who profess Socialist principles are prepared to join forces with the nationalists for the attainment of self-government, either because of patriotic sentiment or else because self-government is a necessary condition for the social reforms they advocate. Once independence were achieved, however, a conflict might arise as it has arisen in other countries; and even now many of the nationalists disapprove of the Socialists and Communists, either because they dislike their social and economic ideas or else because they think it inopportune to raise such issues at the present time.

Other difficulties for the nationalist movement arise out of the existence of large religious and other minorities and of considerable foreign interests. The next two chapters will be given to an analysis of these factors.

[1] See Chapter X.

In the State of Syria the disquiet may be traced back to that opposition to the general policy of the Mandatory Power which has been analyzed in Chapter IX. The opposition was strengthened by the many administrative and economic grievances which have also been dealt with. It found expression in a number of local disturbances and risings at the very beginning of the French occupation, the most notable of them the revolt of Ibrahim Hananu in North Syria and the rising in the Hauran. As time went on the restlessness was increased still further by the instability of French policy: the appointment and recall of a number of High Commissioners; the consequent changes in the higher personnel of the mandatory administration; the creation and then the dissolution of a Federation. These were further causes of disquiet: the repercussion in Syria of the growing hostility of the Palestinian Arabs to Zionism and to British policy, and the activities of Syrian emigrants, particularly of the Syro-Palestinian Committees in Cairo and in Geneva. Of the group in Geneva the leading spirit was the Amir Shakib Arslan, a distinguished writer and publicist, by origin a Lebanese Druze, who had given all his life to the spread first of Pan-Islamic and then of Pan-Arab ideas.

All these factors contributed to create a strong opposition to French rule; it was led and organized by the 'People's Party', which grew rapidly in the years prior to the revolt. The nationalist opposition was to some extent concerned with general Arab problems: the independence and union of the whole Arab world. In local matters, its main purposes were two. First, it advocated the union of the French Mandated Territories. Jebel Druze and the Alawi region, it was claimed, should be wholly incorporated in the State of Syria; Lebanon was to be at most autonomous within a Syrian or Arab State, and was to be shorn of the territories assigned to it in 1920. Secondly, Syria should be given genuine self-government immediately, and complete independence as soon as possible. This would involve on the one hand the relaxation of French control over the administration; on the other a rigid definition of the points at which and the period for which French armed forces could be maintained in Syria, and ultimately their complete withdrawal. It was around these two points that Franco-Syrian relations revolved throughout the period of the Mandate.

7

In Jebel Druze discontent developed later and more suddenly. The Druzes were not hostile to the Mandatory Power so long as the latter was ruled in its dealings with them by the agreement of 1921. An indigenous administration was established. Salim al-Atrash, a member of the leading family of the Jebel, was chosen as Governor by the Druze notables. His tenure of office was troubled, it is true, but this arose entirely from conflicts inside the Druze community. There were rivalries within the Atrash family; for example, Sultan al-Atrash revolted against his kinsman the Governor. Moreover, there was a growing movement of the smaller landowners against the great families of the Jebel; the Druze feudal organization was beginning to crack.

In 1923, on the death of Salim al-Atrash, the Druze notables elected as Governor a French official, Captain Carbillet. He initiated a policy of administrative and social reforms. They were sincerely intended to improve social conditions in the Jebel, and were carried out with great vigour. But the novelty of his measures, the use of compulsory labour and other harsh methods to execute them, and a lack of tact about Carbillet's way of dealing with opposition, quickly alienated many sections of the population.

Until 1925 there was no open unrest; and there was no contact between Arab nationalist circles in Damascus and the malcontents in Jebel Druze. But in May, 1925, Captain Carbillet went on leave, and the unrest of the Druzes came to the surface in complaints against him and demands for the redress of grievances. These demands were not sympathetically received by General Sarrail, who had succeeded General Weygand as High Commissioner in November, 1924, and who had already aroused widespread hostility by his anti-clericalism, his disrespect for tradition and his clumsy handling of people. He increased the discontent of the Druzes by declaring that in his view the agreement of 1921 had only an historical importance, and he brought it to boiling-point in July, 1925, when on his orders three Druze leaders were lured to Damascus under pretence of receiving their demands, arrested there and sent into enforced residence at Palmyra.

8

In July the Druzes rose in revolt under Sultan al-Atrash. ooo

present time. This was a denial of the separate existence of Jebel Druze, the Alawi district, the Lebanese Republic, Palestine and Transjordan; and M. Ponsot judged it to be irreconcilable both with France's international obligations and with the existing situation in fact and in law. Again, four other Articles asserted the right of the President of the Republic to grant pardons, conclude treaties, appoint representatives abroad and proclaim martial law (73, 74, 75 and 112); and Article 110 declared that the organization of the army would form the subject of a special law. These five Articles also the High Commissioner thought to be incompatible with the obligations of France. He therefore asked that the Articles concerned should be separated from the general body of the draft. The Assembly refused, and M. Ponsot thereupon adjourned it for three months in August, 1928, and for a further three in November. He made an alternative suggestion, that the Assembly should modify the wording of Article 2 and should retain the other offending articles but add to the draft a general reservation safeguarding France's international obligations. This also proved abortive, since he and the Assembly could not agree upon a text for the reservation.

In February, 1929, the work of the Assembly was prorogued *sine die*. During this period and throughout 1929 the split between the National Bloc and 'moderates' grew ever wider. The former, while remaining tranquil, demanded the negotiation of a Treaty to replace the Mandate; the latter continued to advocate a policy of co-operation with France, and attempted without much success to form an effective political organization. The High Commissioner found it impossible to reach an agreement with the nationalists on the constitutional question, while the 'moderates' were too weak and divided for their support to be of value to him; he therefore felt himself bound to give up the attempt to entrust to the Syrian people the responsibility for the elaboration of their own constitution. Accordingly he dissolved the Constituent Assembly in May, 1930, and on his own initiative issued a Constitution for the State of Syria. It was to come into force after the election of the members of a Chamber of Deputies, at a date to be fixed by the High Commissioner.

This Constitution was virtually the same as that drafted by the Assembly, except for such changes as were necessary to

At the beginning of 1941 the unrest which had been for so long latent came to a head. Strikes and demonstrations began in the Syrian towns in February, in protest against the dearth of essential foodstuffs and the failure of the authorities to stop profiteering. They very soon turned into political disturbances, directed by a number of nationalist committees and leaders, and above all by Shukri al-Quwatli, who in March issued a manifesto setting forth their objectives. He condemned the existing Government of Bahij al-Khatib as a group of men whose sentiments were not those of the population; he declared that the legal basis of French rule no longer existed since the League of Nations had ceased to function; and he therefore demanded the immediate formation of a national Government. Shortly afterwards, in consequence of the continuation of the disturbances, which indeed spread for a few days from Syria to the towns of the Lebanese coast, the Government of Bahij al-Khatib resigned. There was a temporary cessation of unrest while the High Commissioner negotiated with Shukri al-Quwatli and others for the formation of a more representative Government; but disturbances broke out once more after the failure of the negotiations.

The recrudescence of the troubles appears to have convinced General Dentz of the necessity of making further concessions. At the beginning of April he broadcast a statement to the Syrian people, setting forth the conclusions to which his conversations with Syrian leaders had led him. First, the independence of Syria remained the aim towards which the Syrians were striving; France was in agreement with this, but the present international situation made it impossible to contemplate a definitive settlement of the problem of the form of government in Syria. Secondly, Syrian public opinion was demanding the establishment of a Government endowed with wider powers. Thirdly, there was a need for an economic and social programme which would help to solve the problems of unemployment, the food supply, agriculture and commerce. In the light of these conclusions the High Commissioner had decided upon the following measures: the replacement of the Council of Directors by a Ministry presided over by a 'Head of the Government'; the formation of an Advisory Assembly, to be composed of representatives of the political, cultural and economic life of the country and of the younger generation, and in which the Druzes and Alawis would also be represented

while retaining their special Statutes; the establishment of a Council of State to draft legislation; the participation of the Syrian Government in the organization of the food supply for Syria and Lebanon; and the execution of an important programme of public works. 'The day of fulfilment is at hand and existing difficulties will be resolved by the co-operation of all and not by demonstrations in the streets. The Syrian nation wishes to carry on its work in an orderly and peaceful manner. Order and peace shall be safeguarded.'[1]

A few days later a prominent business man and member of a leading Damascene family, Khalid al-Azm, was appointed Prime Minister, with a Ministry most of the members of which, like the Prime Minister himself, had not previously taken a prominent part in the political life of Syria. In its programme the new Government promised to reform the administration, to develop external trade, to pay special attention to the problems of education and youth, to ameliorate the lot of the workers and officials, and to preserve strict non-partisanship in all political matters.

Shortly afterwards a similar change took place in Lebanon. The President of the Republic and the Secretary of State resigned their offices, and were replaced by a politically neutral Ministry headed by Alfred Naccache, a Maronite judge who had hitherto played no important part in politics.

5

During these uncertain months the true centre of Syrian political life was Baghdad. It has already been made clear how united is political feeling in the different centres of the Fertile Crescent. The Palestinian Revolt of 1936-1939 had received encouragement and help from the neighbouring Arab countries; and after it subsided the thought persisted that the sorrows of Palestine, and also the sorrows of Syria, could only be ended by a united effort of the whole Arab people. It was also widely believed that in this effort Iraq would have to play the leading part, since it possessed greater freedom of action than most of the other Arab regions, and also the nucleus of a trained army. The sense that the destiny of their nation depended on them exalted the spirits of a certain group among the Iraqi Arabs; and their enthusiasm was further increased by the teaching of the

[1] See Appendix A10.

many Syrians and Palestinians, teachers, government officials and political exiles, who thronged Baghdad in the first years of the war. To the general Arab unrest there were added particular Iraqi grievances; and both were encouraged to express themselves violently by the comparative failure of British arms in 1940 and 1941 and the great though temporary influence of German propaganda. Finally, when the general position of the war seemed most propitious, Rashid Ali raised the banner of revolt. He was supported by some, although by no means all, of the nationalists in other Arab countries; in imagination they saw the revolt not as a seizure of power by the Army but as a protest of the Arabs against British policy in Palestine and French in Syria. When the revolt failed, a wave of doubt and self-criticism swept over the nationalist ranks, in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, no less than in Iraq.

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These events were swiftly followed by others of even greater import. Ever since the French capitulation German agents had been active in Syria and Lebanon. In the first months of 1941 German influence was thought to be increasing rapidly and alarmingly; and it was believed that the completion of her Balkan campaign had brought nearer the possibility of a gradual infiltration of German troops and agents into the French Mandated Territories, until finally Germany would be able to obtain complete control of them. Her forces would then be in a position to threaten the British armies in Palestine and Egypt, and Turkey to the north.

The danger was brought to a head by the outbreak of the Iraqi insurrection in May. German aircraft were permitted by the Government of Vichy to use Syrian air-bases as stages on their journey to Iraq; and it was obvious to those who had studied German methods of infiltration that this was the beginning of a process which would, unless forestalled, soon take on such proportions that to check it would be of the greatest difficulty.

It therefore came as no surprise to the general public when June 8th, 1941, a mixed force of Imperial, Free French and other Allied troops crossed the frontiers of Syria and Lebanon; the whole force was under the command of General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and the Free French contingent under that

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642 are not removable except by the action of the Supreme Court of Justice.

Political Parties

665 668 Since 1946 political parties in Syria have been little more than côteries grouped temporarily around individual leaders. It is hard to distinguish between the personalities and the policies of the Nationalist and the Populist Parties, for individuals and groups divided differently on different matters. In fact, there have been only two main parties, those in power and those waiting to accede to power. The two chief parties in opposition have been the Nationalist Bloc and the People's Party, groups of men who also called themselves Liberals or Constitutionalists. These two parties' main concern has been to maintain or to establish themselves in power; both have naturally been nationalist in sentiment but no distinctive programmes or tendencies are to be seen except in the more extreme political groups.

The Communist Party and its leader, Khaled Baqdash, went underground in 1947 and since then the interests of Communism have best been served in Syria by those who, while not adopting the theories of the Communists, share with them a dislike for the Western Powers. Chief in this category is the Muslim Brotherhood, one of whose leaders, Shaikh Maarouf Dawalibi, has said that he would prefer Russian to Western domination. In 1947 an attempt was made by the Brotherhood to obtain sufficient weight in Parliament to resist the encroachment of Western ideas and amusements, but in January 1952 the Muslim Brotherhood and all political parties were suspended. Although nationalist politicians can claim much of the credit for the achievement of independence, to the 'man in the street' politicians have since been discredited, and it may be that a slower approach towards parliamentary democracy will yield results that were denied to the post-war precipitancy.

Political History since 1945

The Nationalist Party came into office in 1943 to wrest independence from the French, whose withdrawal removed also the only plank in the party's political platform. Their stock declined more rapidly when the conduct of the Palestine war and internal government aroused general disapproval. In 1947 the Populist Party came into power but Jamil Mardam, the Nationalist Party Premier, retained his place; from 1946–8 Mardam showed his skill as a tactician in controlling a Chamber in which his supporters were in a minority. In 1948 President

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Quwatli received an extension of office, but the completeness of the military failure in Palestine and the rising cost of living at home increased dissensions among the politicians and dissatisfaction among the people and in the same year Khaled al-Azm, the Populist, took over the premiership. To most Syrians this change meant little, for Syria's material progress since the war has been achieved despite rather than because of the efforts of her politicians. The change of Government did nothing to reduce the people's dissatisfaction and the political atmosphere was only cleared by a coup d'état by Colonel Husni az-Zaim, a Kurd with long army service, on 3 March 1947. He took control and arrested the President and other politicians; finding insufficient support in the Parliament, he dissolved it and became himself first Prime Minister, then Marshal, and then President. When first he took power he won popular support by the spate of positive legislation he issued, but he was soon corrupted by power into becoming arrogant at home; and in quarrelling with the Hashimite neighbours, Iraq and Jordan, he showed himself too friendly with Egypt for the liking of some Syrians. Although nearly 90 per cent of the electorate had voted for Zaim, there was little public outcry when Colonel Sami Hinnawi, on 14 August 1949, overthrew and killed Zaim and his Prime Minister, Muhsin Barazi. Hinnawi ostensibly returned to his barracks leaving Hashim al-Atasi as President and Khaled al-Azm as Prime Minister, with a mixed Cabinet including Rushdi Kekhya of the Populist Party and Akram Haurani, leader of his own party. In November 1949 elections were held and these confirmed Atasi as President, but a dispute arose concerning the terms of the presidential oath. The bone of contention was, in fact, Hinnawi's leaning toward a pact with Iraq, and so to estrangement with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. A pact with the Hashimis was anathema to Haurani and also to his associate Lieut.-Colonel Adib Shishakli, who brought about the third military coup on 19 December 1949. Hinnawi was allowed to leave the country but was later killed in Beirut by an avenger of Barazi.

Colonel Shishakli had fought against the Jews in Palestine and had been Chief of Police and Security under Marshal Zaim; he had been a member of the Syrian People's Party and so fell out with Zaim over the case of Antoun Saadeh.[1] He is a professional soldier with no strong family or political ties to those who had hitherto ruled Syria. Shishakli has kept in the background but retained a veto over the decisions of the politicians and a firm hand on the army, posting to distant stations

[1] See below, p. 479.

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665 669 or retiring officers who showed signs of becoming dangerous. In 1952 he played a large part in endeavouring to give a firm foundation to the new Umma Party and has also made rather more public appearances than at first.[1]

Khaled al-Azm's Cabinet had no common policy to bind them together and resigned in June 1950 to give way to a wholly Populist Cabinet in which Colonel Fawzi Silu took the Defence portfolio as the army's nominee. The rest of the year saw minor constitutional changes and there were stirrings of dissent amongst the military leaders which came to light in the murder of the Commander of the army air force and in an attempt on the life of Shishakli. In the autumn of 1950 pro-Hashimite politicians were out of favour and most of the time in prison. In March 1951 the premiership changed hands; al-Azm was succeeded by Nazim Qudsi, a Populist with no hatred for the Western Powers. Qudsi tried, but failed, to limit the authority of the army; al-Azm again took office, but he, too, found no support in the Parliament. With Shishakli's backing, a new Government was formed in August 1951 by Hasan al-Hakim who could not, however, agree with the attack on the proposals for a Middle East defence organization made by his Foreign Minister, Faidi al-Atasi. Hakim resigned and, in November, a period of muddle was resolved by another coup by Shishakli, as the result of which many of the politicians who had recently held office were imprisoned. At the end of 1951 Parliament was dissolved and Colonel Silu was appointed Chief of State *ad interim* and the government carried on by the senior civil servants.

In January 1952 the Muslim Brotherhood, and in April all political parties, were dissolved and the military rulers passed legislation to forbid students, trade unions, and sports clubs from taking part in any political activity. At the end of the year General Shishakli, now Vice-Premier and Chief of Staff, supported the formation of a new political party known as the Arab Liberation Movement, in the hope that parliamentary [642] life could gradually be restored. In the following summer (21 June 1953) he announced a new constitution on the presidential model, based on 'the aims and aspirations of the people', giving executive power to the President but 'permanent power of control' to the Chamber of Deputies. A referendum held on 10 July resulted in the adoption of the new constitution and the election for a period of five years of Shishakli as President and 666 Premier. A new electoral law, promulgated on 1 August, prepared the way for elections on 9 October, and at the beginning

[1] See Alford Carlton, 'Syria Today', *International Affairs*, January 1954.

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563 equally to Syria. The Christians still form a social unit, or rather a series of inter-connected social units, the relations of which with the Moslem community are largely formal. This is especially true of the older generation brought up under the Ottoman regime. The introduction of freer social customs from the West, the spread of education and the growth of the idea of the nation between them are helping to make the younger generation less conscious of its confessional ties, and may in the end succeed in breaking down the barriers between the sects.

Western ideas and forces have so far made little impression outside the few large towns. In the smaller towns and the villages, traditions still rule unchecked, and the old social exclusiveness of the sects still persists. But on the other hand the very nature of life in small towns or villages tends to the assimilation of the social characteristics of the minorities to those of the majority. Moreover, it encourages economic interdependence and co-operation. Economically, the Christian do not differ much from the Moslem peasants. It is only in the large towns that the economic structure of the Christian communities diverges from that of the majority. The educational progress of the 563 871 Christians has been swifter than that of the Moslems, and has diverged from it in some ways. In 1938 the Christians accounted for about 32 per cent of the total school population, although they form only 19 per cent of the population as a whole. They account for an even larger proportion of the pupils of secondary schools; and although only 20 per cent of the students of the University in Damascus are Christians, many others are studying at the Universities in Beirut, or in Europe.

It must be noticed also that 32 per cent of the Christian students attend foreign schools, 61 per cent private schools and only 7 per cent official ones. Almost all the foreign schools are controlled by Christian missions, although some are owned by the French 'Mission Laïque', and about 170 out of the 294 private schools are controlled by Christian communities. Thus, the Christians are not only obtaining more education than the Moslems, but 563 it is education of a different sort. Individual Christians play an 668 important part in the national movement, in Syria as elsewhere. The most prominent of them in recent times have been the brothers Faris and Faiz al-Khuri, the former of whom was President of the Chamber of Deputies from 1936 to 1939 and again in 1943–4, and became Prime Minister in 1944.

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It is not simply isolated individuals who feel sympathy with the national movement. Sympathy is widespread among the Greek Orthodox, who are altogether Arab in culture and feeling. This is true of the clergy as well as the laity, and of the higher clergy as well as the lower: the Bishop of Hama was Vice-President of the Pan-Arab Conference of Bludan in 1937. The younger generation, brought up under the influence of nationalistic ideas in school and out of it, tend to be as wholly devoted to the Arab cause as their Moslem contemporaries.

Roman Catholics and Uniates tend to be less sympathetic, partly because they are less conscious and proud of their Arab tradition; partly because they are much influenced by French Catholic missions and schools; and partly because of all sections of the population they have been the best treated by the French authorities, so that the relaxation of French control means loss of their privileged position.

The leaders of the national movement have always professed the best possible intentions towards the Christians and have been quick to disown anything which might give the opposite impression. The periodical crises of nationalistic feeling have been accompanied by scenes of Moslem-Christian fraternization. This attitude on the part of the leaders often arises from a genuine desire to build a national unity which will transcend religious differences and make them less acute; or else from a desire not to alienate Western opinion, which tends to care more for minorities than for majorities.

Although the more enlightened nationalists are tolerant, among those who are less enlightened there still exists considerable suspicion of the Christians as a whole. It springs not only from ancient prejudice; it is due to the fact that certain of the Christians, not wholly against their will, have been used by the French as instruments of domination and as a pretext for delaying the grant of independence. Once the problem of Franco-Arab relations is definitely settled, the tension between Moslems and Christians will gradually be relaxed.

The Armenians

In general, the Armenians in Syria do not need special attention. Most of what has been said about their fellow-countrymen in Lebanon is true of them also. It is necessary only to call attention to the special situation existing in Aleppo, where the Armenian

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of them have settled in Palestine, and those who are left cannot be wholly unaffected by the rising wave of Arab hostility to Zionism. 563

The Isma'ilis form a compact community, backward and without any political claims except to be left alone. The Turcomans also raise no problem in themselves. Originally a nomadic community, they have now become agricultural, and in some regions they have been completely Arabized. The Circassians, however, have resisted assimilation more successfully. They still remain as a separate entity with their own language and customs, and have even at times claimed autonomy. Both in Turkish times and under the Mandate they have been used by the authorities to hold down the population; the French for example used them to suppress the Syrian Revolution of 1925. This has made them disliked by the Arabs; but there is no obstacle to their ultimate assimilation.

The Kurds are of much greater importance. There are over 100,000 of them in the north of the country, mainly in the foothills of the Taurus north of Aleppo, and 20,000 in Damascus. Most of them have been in the country for generations, but some have fled from Turkey in the last twenty years. Almost all are Sunni Moslems, but there are some Kurdish-speaking Yazidis, Christians and Alawis. The language of the majority is Kurdish, but many are bi-lingual in Kurdish and Arabic, and some, particularly in Damascus, speak only Arabic. There is a gradual process of assimilation going on among them, helped by their backward cultural state; they have practically no facilities for education except in Arabic.

Originally nomads, they have now mostly settled on the land as peasants. They are dominated by their land-owning class, but less so than formerly. Although sedentary, they still preserve their tribal organization, and on the whole tribal loyalty is still much stronger among them than national loyalty.

In general, they are whole-heartedly opposed to Turkey, are suspicious of Arab nationalism, friendly to the U.S.S.R. and grateful to France for the favourable treatment they have received. Kurdish nationalism is strong among some groups of them, particularly those in Damascus. Damascus and Beirut, indeed, have become the main centres of the Kurdish national and cultural movement, directed largely by the Badr Khan brothers. The nationalists do not for the most part expect independence, 563 668

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563 but they claim autonomy in the Jazirah or at least the right
668 to live as Kurds, immune from attempts to force them to assimilate.

French Policy

648 France's hostility to Arab nationalism led her to show special
563 favour to the minorities in Syria. This policy revealed itself in numerous administrative acts, and in such military acts as the recruitment of special detachments from Circassians, Kurds and other minorities, but it is most clearly shown and has had the most important consequences in regard to the two compact minorities, the Druzes and Alawis.

648 In 1921 an agreement was concluded between the French
563 authorities and some of the Druze leaders, providing for a national
631 government assisted by French advisers. From this time until 1936 there existed a 'Government of Jebel Druze' independent of Syria and under all-pervasive French control. At first, French policy ran counter to local susceptibilities, and this led to the Druze Revolt of 1925, which became a Syrian national revolt. After the suppression of the revolt, the same system was continued, and was formalized by the Organic Law of 1930. Its effect was to encourage the particularist feeling of the Druzes and to arouse among certain of them a feeling of gratitude to France.

Another autonomous territory was created in the 'Territory' or 'Government' of the Alawis, set up in 1920. It possessed an administrative system similar to that of Jebel Druze, formalized in a similar organic law issued in 1930, and under a still stricter French control. The administration did something to improve the very backward condition of the Alawis and to arouse among them a corporate self-consciousness and a feeling of attachment to France. In general, the district was peaceful after unrest at the beginning; the only disturbances came from the Sunnis and Greek Orthodox, who believed their interests were being neglected and demanded the attachment of the district to Syria.

Nationalism and the Minorities

563 The leaders of Arab nationalism in Syria recognize the import-
668 ance of the minority problem and have made considerable efforts to win the confidence of the minorities. In principle they regard Arab Christians as on a level with Moslems inside the Arab community, once they are willing to accept their obligations as

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members of the Arab nation. As for the linguistic minorities, they insist on a certain degree of assimilation, but there is no question of treating them as inferiors because of their racial origins. 563 668

They are opposed, however, to the grant of a special regime to minorities, since it would only perpetuate their difference; and even more strongly would they oppose any foreign intervention or influence in support of the minorities. In regard to the compact minorities, while they recognize the need for careful and tactful administration, they believe they are capable of giving such administration, and wholly reject the claims of the autonomists, both because the grant of autonomy would play into the hands of foreign powers eager to intervene, and because, so long as they remained autonomous, the minorities would never learn how to live with their fellow-nationals.

The Treaty of 1936 and the Minorities

The autonomy of Jebel Druze and the Alawis was brought to an end by the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936. In December of that year decrees were issued annexing the two Governments to the Syrian Republic as the Provinces of Jebel Druze and Latakia respectively. Certain safeguards were, however, provided for the special position of the two provinces. On the one hand, they were given a special administration and financial regime. On the other, the military convention attached to the Treaty stipulated for the maintenance of French troops in both districts for a period of five years from the coming into force of the Treaty. 648 563 631

At the same time, the administration of the Jazirah was placed under the control of the Government of Damascus; it had never been formally autonomous but in practice had been under direct French administration since the establishment of civil government there.

In each of these three districts there was a group which welcomed the union with Syria, and others who thought it in their interest to side with the nationalists who seemed to be the rising power. Others again did not object to incorporation in Syria, so long as the special position of the provinces was respected and they were fairly treated in such matters as government appointments. There were some, however, who desired to return to complete autonomy under French protection. From 1937 648 563 664

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to 1939 this last group grew stronger, and more or less brought administration to a standstill. There were a number of reasons for this. The Government was hasty and tactless; some of its supporters were intolerant. The fears and suspicions of the minorities were too strong to be overcome in a few months, and there can be no doubt that they were played upon by some of the French officials who refused to accept the change of policy laid down in the Treaty of 1936.

In 1937 and again in 1939, Jebel Druze was disturbed. In Latakia discontent grew gradually but did not become serious until the rising of a section of the Alawis led by Suleiman Murshid, a self-made notable and self-styled god. In 1937 a section of the Kurds and of the Christians of the Jazirah caused disturbances. Their case was strengthened by the support of Cardinal Tappouni, the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch. Again in 1939, there were manifestations on a large scale.

Meanwhile, relations between the French Government and the nationalists had been growing worse, owing to the reluctance of the former to secure the ratification of the Treaty. By 1939, France had reversed the policy inaugurated in 1936. In July 1939, the Constitution was suspended. Almost simultaneously decrees were issued restoring the autonomy of the Jebel Druze and the Alawis. At the same time the Jazirah was placed once more under direct French rule; but by December 1940, matters had returned to normal and, once more, the authority of the Syrian Government was imposed in the Jazirah.

It was not only the compact minorities which had been restless during these years. The scattered minorities also had been apprehensive of nationalist policy towards them. They had not been persecuted on any large scale, and officially the Government had frequently declared its desire to treat all citizens equally; but there had been enough acts of discrimination to appear to justify the pre-conceived fears of the minorities. It was partly to allay these fears that the Syrian Government concluded supplementary agreements with the French Government in 1937 and 1938, containing among other things guarantees for the position of communities and individuals.

The difficulties of the situation must not, however, be exaggerated. Not all minorities were equally hostile to nationalism. Those which were most hostile were the Catholics, who had profited most from French rule; others, like the Greek Orthodox

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and a section of the Armenians, were able to maintain good relations with the Government. In general, what troubles occurred were no more than were inevitable in a period of transition.

Developments since 1941

In September 1941, General Catroux proclaimed the independence of Syria. His proclamation contained the following statement about minorities:

> Free France considers that the State of Syria forms politically and territorially an indivisible unity, of which the integrity ought to be preserved against any dismemberment. In consequence she will look with favour upon the strengthening of the political, cultural, and economic links which unite the different portions of Syria. To this end, the Delegate-General and Plenipotentiary of Free France will revise the texts defining the particular status formerly accorded to certain regions, in such a way that, while the administrative and financial autonomy to which they show themselves firmly attached is preserved, they shall be politically subordinated to the Syrian central power. Thus the principle of Syrian unity and the particular aspirations of these regions will be reconciled.
>
> It remains understood, moreover, that the guarantees of public right set out in the organic statutes in favour of individuals and of communities will be maintained and given full effect.[1]

In accordance with these principles, the two autonomous territories were re-attached to the rest of Syria. Thus, the first Government formed after the proclamation contained a Druze and an Alawi Minister; and in February 1942, the two provinces were once more formally annexed to Syria, with provisions for a special administrative and financial regime. In September 1944 the Administrative Council of Jebel Druze voted unanimously for the abrogation of its special regime and complete incorporation in the Syrian State.

In the summer of 1943, elections were held and subsequently a nationalist government took office. As formerly, the Chamber contained representatives of the minorities and the Cabinet a Christian minister. The Government made clear its intention of treating all members of the community on a footing of complete

[1] General Catroux's Proclamation of Syrian Independence, September 28, 1941. *Journal Officiel de la France Libre* (London), Première année, No. 13, December 9, 1941.

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CHAPTER V

SYRIA

In Syria, where the idea of Arab independence found some of its earliest protagonists, nationalism has been marked by a special degree of ill-temper, perhaps because the masses of the larger towns—Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, etc.—at an early stage became an object of political manœuvring.

Anti-foreign feelings had been aroused as early as 1925, when clashes with the French Mandatory régime led to the bombardment of Damascus. After the Palestine Arab Revolt of 1936, Syria became a refuge for Palestinian Arab terrorists on the run. Fawzi Kaukji—an Albanian adventurer specialising in gun-running and gang warfare on behalf of Arab extremists—Amin al Husseini—the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem—and many other "wanted" disturbers of the peace found fertile soil for their activities in Syria.

Here the connection between Arab nationalism and Muslim fanaticism was particularly close, and even sermons in the Mosques frequently descended to the level of vicious and inflammatory diatribes against non-believers. As early as October, 1945, the leader of the "Young Muslims' Association," Sheikh Mustafa al-Sibaj, in a violent speech after the Friday midday prayers in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, threatened the Jews in Arab countries with disaster "if the Palestine problem is not solved in favour of the Arabs."

These characteristics of Arab nationalism in Syria have had their effect not only on the Jews but on the Christian minority also. Hence the attractiveness of neighbouring Lebanon, with its security of life for minorities, as a goal for Christian emigration. The same was true as regards the Jews of Syria, a steady stream of whom has been moving to Lebanon for the last 25 years. The early trickle has recently become so great in volume that, by now, it is believed that only a few remnants of the Jewish population are left in the two big towns of Aleppo and Damascus.

The last census—that of 1943—gave the number of Jews in Syria as 29,770 out of a total population of 2,860,411 (of whom 2,424,817 were Muslims). The majority of the Jews used to live in Aleppo and Damascus, with about 17,000 in Aleppo (compared with 35,000 in 1910) and 11,000 in Damascus. The remainder, rather isolated, dwelt mostly in the north-eastern province of Jezirah, where they had settled in 1924, along with Armenians, Kurds, and Assyrians from Turkey and Iraq.

Of the 29,000 Jews in Syria in 1943, about 15,000 had left the country by 1947. At that time, there still remained about 10,000-11,000 in Aleppo and about 2,500-3,000 in Damascus. Less than 1,000

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162 were left in the Jezirah district. An additional 5,000-6,000 Jews
167 emigrated at the beginning of 1948, leaving a total of about 9,000, with 4,500 in Aleppo, 4,000 in Damascus, and 500 in the Jezirah district. Further emigration took place that year; and it is estimated that there are now fewer than 6,000 left in the whole country.

This exodus was the culmination of many years of intimidation, material decline, and moral isolation. The smaller community in Damascus had always been poor. About 80 per cent earned their living as labourers and pedlars; approximately 15 per cent were able to maintain a slightly higher standard; while only 5 per cent were able to make a good living, mostly in commerce. The Aleppo community had in bygone days been prosperous and had been an active and important element of the city's once flourishing commerce. The rapid deterioration of conditions, however, made itself felt particularly strongly among the Jews of Aleppo; and since the wealthy were the first to leave the country, the remainder were impoverished even more swiftly.

197 Although knowledge of French is widespread among educated
563 Jews, the every-day language of the majority is either Arabic or Ladino. There are two *Alliance Israélite Universelle* schools, one in Aleppo and the other in Damascus. Since the convocation of the first Parliament in December, 1936, there has been one Jewish representative in the Chamber of Deputies. He was, it is true, allowed to retain his seat even when persecution of the Jews reached its height. But, isolated as he was in a sea of feverish hostility, there was little he could do to alleviate the situation.

In 1945, a meeting of Islamic religious leaders in Damascus, presided over by the Mufti of Damascus, sent a telegram to the Allied Governments, threatening that a Holy War against the Jews would be declared by all Islamic countries if Jewish immigration into Palestine continued. Within a month, this action and similar incitement from high quarters, coupled as they were with a violent anti-Jewish press campaign, bore fruit.

[579] On the Muslim holiday of Qurban Bairam, on November 18, an
563 infuriated mob, goaded on by a group of students, broke into the Great
668 Synagogue in Aleppo, smashed the candle burning in front of the Ark, battered some old Jews who were praying, and burnt the prayer books.

This was the signal for the outbreak of a general anti-Jewish campaign, made the worse by the incessant agitation carried on by nationalist orators among the Arab masses. There was the ugly murder of Jacques Franco, Assistant Headmaster of the *Alliance* School in Damascus. Suspicion that his death was the result of the prevailing unrest has never been entirely removed, even though there is insufficient evidence to prove it. There was the forcing of Rabbi Moshe Nahum, of the Jewish community of Jezirah, to make a statement protesting against Jewish immigration into Palestine. There was the humiliating spectacle of the heads of all three Jewish communities

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being compelled, in November, 1945, to take part in the demonstrations against the Balfour Declaration, and Jewish shopkeepers being ordered to close their shops as a sign of solidarity with the Muslims. However little concerned Syrian Jewry may have been with Zionist aspirations in Palestine, its feelings on the subject could hardly have been strong enough to cause its leaders—"of their own free will"—to announce that they intended to hold a banquet in honour of the notorious Fawzi Kaukji—a wartime officer of the German Waffen S.S.

Not even in Egypt did public hysteria against the helpless and isolated Jewish minority go to such lengths as it did in Syria. Doubtless this fact is due to the combination of a half-educated university youth and an illiterate, hungry, and disease-ridden urban populace. In Syria, as in Egypt, such a combination has given an extraordinarily explosive character to the nationalist movement.

When the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on the Palestine issue visited Syria, its members were struck by the cowed and intimidated manner of the heads of the Jewish community. One member of the committee, Mr. Bartley Crum, in his book *Behind the Silken Curtain* (p. 239), gives the following description of the scene when three representatives of the Jewish community arrived to give evidence:

> The committee of three chosen Jews appeared. Only one spoke. There had been testimony in Jerusalem before us by Oriental Jews charging that Jews in the Oriental countries were given only second-class citizenship. Our sub-committee expected the Jewish spokesman they now heard on the scene to need far more than 20 minutes to tell his story. Instead, he used 45 seconds of his allotted time. He raced through a one-sentence written statement, in which he said that the Jews of Syria were happy and not discriminated against; that their situation was excellent under the present Syrian Government; and that they had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with Zionism. The three presented a picture of terrified men. . . .

The tragic farce of the repeated declarations of solidarity with the Muslims forced on the leaders of the Jewish community did not diminish the flood of persecution. Thus Shukri al-Quwatli, the President of the Syrian Republic, made no effort to halt anti-Jewish discrimination, even though in 1946 a Jewish delegation made special representations to him. On the contrary, in 1947, the Syrian Government promulgated new restrictions, prohibiting Jewish inhabitants from leaving their areas of residence.

The effect of this order was to paralyse even what remained of Jewish economic activity; and it should be noted that the order appeared even before the partition of Palestine was decided on by the United Nations.

Within four days of the United Nations decision being made public, the mob was sufficiently worked up for anti-Jewish rioting to break out in Aleppo. On December 2, 1947, a crowd, spurred on by agitators, burnt down the four big synagogues in the city plus